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Testimony in Support of HB 5707 - Environment Committee - March 20, 2015

I would like to thank the Environment Committee for the opportunity to express my support of HB 5707, An Act Requiring Certain Higher Education Facilities That Conduct Research Using Cats or Dogs to Offer Such Cats or Dogs to Animal Rescue Organizations Prior to Euthanizing any Such Cat or Dog and Providing for the Proper Sheltering of Dogs.

As a constituent who is concerned about the humane treatment of animals, I urge you to support and joint favorably report on this bill.

Even though our state cruelty laws require "shelter", there are no requirements that specify what this means. Connecticut hosts a range of extreme climate conditions that accompany its beautiful four seasons, including cold winters and hot summers. As a caring pet owner, I cannot imagine leaving my dog outside permanently. Sadly, some people do leave their dogs outside constantly, with nothing more than a tarp or cardboard box as shelter.

Additionally, there is no requirement that dogs have access to liquid, unfrozen water. There is no requirement for dogs to live outside of a lightless box, or to have flooring that is dry or safe. There is no requirement for a dog to live outside of a cage large enough to move around in a normal way. We don't legally require that dogs live outside of their own fecal waste, or outside of wire-bottom cages that cut into their paws.

Inhumane shelter conditions like these are unacceptable to me, but sadly, legal. I support giving law enforcement the legal reason to take action against residents who do not properly care for their dogs. For our ACOs to help dogs trapped in these substandard living conditions, we have to define proper shelter, as outlined in HB 5707, the bare minimum of what safe, humane sheltering should be for any dog.

I also support the provision of the bill, requiring that research labs in higher education adopt out dogs and cats to a loving family once they are no longer needed for research purposes. Frequently, research animals are euthanized when the facility is done testing on them. What a terrible fate. When these animals have sacrificed so much for humankind, I believe they deserve an opportunity to do what dogs have been doing for thousands of years, and living a life as a companion to a doting family.

I am a volunteer for rescue organizations here in Connecticut, and would love the opportunity to help find these deserving animals a loving home. Whether it's giving these animals only a few weeks, or many years, they deserve a chance at life after labs.

Please joint favorably report HB 5707 to require proper shelter for dogs and to require colleges and universities that use cats or dogs in laboratory research or testing to offer these animals for adoption by animal rescue organizations after testing.

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to testify and I do hope you will strongly support this important piece of legislation.